

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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INFO ZEN AMCONSUL DOUALA (BY POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 4081

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, CM, US

SUBJECT: RETURN OF AFO-KOM

REF: YAOUNDE 4034

1. SUMMARY. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED WITH ECLAT, DESPITE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT CONTINUED TO LAST MINUTE AND BEYOND. STATUE RETURNED TO FON IN HEART OF KOM. AMERICAN VISITORS, INCLUDING JOURNALIST, ACCOMPANIED ALL THE WAY TO LWFYOM. WILDLY ENTHUSIASTIC CROWDS GREETED AND SHOWED GRATITUDE TO VISITORS. "OFFICIAL" DELEGATION LEFT CAMEROON DECEMBER 12 DELIGHTED

WITH RESULTS. JOURNALISTS LEAVING MOSTLY SATISFIED DESPITE (A) REGRET ON PART OF SOME AT BEING DENIED PERMISSION BY GURC TO STAY IN KOM REGION A FEW DAYS LONGER AND (B) BAD AFTERTASTE FROM SMOTHERING BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL EXERCISED BY GURC WHICH ENTERTAINED VISITORS REGALLY WHILE CONTINUALLY RESITATING TO LET THEM CARRY OUT THEIR MISSION AS THEY SAW IT. BEHIND IT ALL WAS GURC'S DESIRE NOT TO LET THIS AMERICAN-CREATED "THING" ABOUT THE "KOM THING" SERVE TO ENHANCE TRIBALISM IN A COUNTRY WHOSE LEADERS SEE NATIONAL UNITY AS EVEN A MORE PRIMARY GOAL THAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER RECURRING FRUSTRATIONS AND UNCERTAINTY ENCOUNTERED DURING THEIR FIRST WEEK IN CAMEROON, AMERICAN VISITORS ACCOMPANYING AFO-A-KOM
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LANDED

AT BALI AIRPORT NEAR BAMENDA REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT PROBLEMS
RESOLVED

AND THAT AFFAIR WOULD CULMINATE WITH HANDOVER OF STATUE NEXT DAY TO
FON IN LAIKOM. THEY WERE JOLTED TO LEARN FROM PROGRAM RECEIVED AT
AIRPORT THAT SCHEDULED FILLED MOSTLY WITH DINNERS AND LUNCHEONS. PLANS

CALLED FOR 80-KILOMETER DRIVE NEXT DAY FROM BAMENDA TO FUNDONG (SEAT
OF

SUB-PREFECTURE, 7 KILOMETERS FROM FON'S CAPITAL
IN LAIKOM), ONE HOUR

IN FUNDONG FOR CEREMONY AND RECEPTION, AND RETURN TO BAMENDA FOR
LUNCH. NOT NECESSARY TO DESCRIBE GROUPS'S DISCONTENT, ESPECIALLY THAT
OF

JOURNALISTS AND MR. GUSSMAN WHO FELT THAT GURC VIOLATING ASSURANCES
THEY HAD RECEIVED FROM ITS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND THAT MISSION
WOULD BE A BUST IF THEY DID NOT SEE STATUE ALL WAY TO LAIKOM.

3. VISTOR'S EXPECTATIONS, HOPES, AND DISAPPOINTMENT MADE KNOWN
DIPLOMATICALLY BY OUR ACCOMPANYING DCM, AND LESS DIPLOMATICALLY BY
OTHERS. OUTCOME AND MINISTER'S INTENTION REMAINED CLOUDED UNTIL JUST
BEFORE DEPARTURE NEXT MORNING FOR FUNDONG, AT WHICH TIME GURC OFFI-
CIALS CONVEYED DECISION APPARENTLY JUST TAKEN THAT PARTY WOULD GO ON
TO LAIKOM AFTER FUNDONG CEREMONY IF ROAD CONDITIONS PERMITTED.

4. ENTHUSIASTICALLY JOYOUS CROWDS LINED KEY POINTS ALONG ROUTE TO
FUNDONG WAVING PALM FRONDS, DANCING, FIRING RIFLES INTO AIR. AMERICAN
VISITORS WERE DELIGHTED BY THIS STRONGOUTPOURING OF EMOTION CLEARLY
DIRECTED TO THEM BY GRATEFUL KOM PEOPLE. VERX IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY
AT FUNDON TOOK PLACE BEFORE EMOTIONAL CROWD OF SEVERAL THOUSAND
KOM, WITH FEVERISH RITUAL DANCES, PANDEMONIUM, AND UNCONTROLLED MOB
SCENE WHEN STATUE WAS STOOD UP ON PLATFORM.

5. IN CEREMONY OF HANDING OVER STATUE TO FON, MINISTER INFO AND
CULTURE

THREW AWAY PREPARED TEXT AND IMPROVISED PASSIONATE, ALMOST BRUTAL
SPEECH IN WHICH HE CALLED ATTENTION TO FACT THAT DISAPPEARANCE OF
STATUE FROM CHIEFLY COMPOUND WAS AN INSIDE JOB, SHARPLY STRESSED THAT
STATUE NOW BELONGED TO GOVT AND ALL CAMEROONIANS AND NOT JUST TO KOM,
AND WARNED STERNLY AGAINST AIASIVE TRIBALISM (USIS IO SUCCEEDED IN
TAPING SPEECH, WILL TRANSMIT TRANSCRIPTION TO DEPT). (COMMENT: SPEECH
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WAS VERY IMPRESSIVE TO VIP LISTENERS, BUT APPARENTLY NOT HEARD BY
GENERAL AUDIENCE SINCE NO PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM. IT WAS USEFUL FOR OUR

AMERICAN VISITORS TO HEAR THIS AUTHENTIC AND IMPRESSIVE OUTPOURING OF
GURC CONCERN FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND FEAR OF TRIBALISM-WHICH NO DOUBT
WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR THE CONTINUING SERIES OF FRUSTRATIONS ENCOUN-
TERED DURING THE PREVIOUS WEEK).

6. VISITORS AND ANYONE ELSE WHO COULD FIT INTO AVAILABLE LAND ROVERS THEN MADE WAY TO LAIKOM UP STEEP MOUNTAIN ROAD THAT HAD BEEN MADE TRAVERSABLE ONLY PREVIOUS EVENING. RECEPTION WAS OVERWHELMING ALONG ROUTE BEFORE ENTRANCE TO VILLAGE AND IN VILLAGE SQUARE. IMPRESSIVE TRIBAL DANCING STAGED IN SQUARE AND AT ROYAL COURTYARD WHERE MESSRS GUSSMAN, SPICELY, AND ELLIS (NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY) WERE DRESSED

IN TRIBAL ROBES BY FON. ROBBINS GIVEN STOOL FOR AFRICAN ART MUSEUM. IT WAS AN IMPRESSIVE SCENE FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING JOURNALISTS. AFTER ABOUT HOUR AND HEBF IN LAIKOM, GROUP LEFT FOR BAMENDA VIA FUNDONG, EX-

HILARATED BY EXPERIENCE AND WISHING IT COULD HAVE LASTED LONGER.

7. WITH EVERYONE IN JOYOUS MOOD AND HOPES HIGH THAT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND ESQUIRE JOURNALISTS WOULD BE ALLOWED REMAIN IN AREA THROUGH WEEKEND TO COMPLETE COVERAGE--A DECISION WHICH WE HAD BEEN GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND WAS MINISTER'S TO MAKE AND ON WHICH FAVORABLE SIGNALS WERE BEING GIVEN BY ACCOMPANYING GURC OFFICIALS, THE BALLOON BURST. MINISTER (AND HIS SUBORDINATES) WERE ANNOYED, INDEED INFURIATED, BY

(1) RELUCTANCE OF SE

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